



# State of the Parish and School Address

## Christ Our Light Parish and St. Benedict School

### January 4, 2026



#### **Sts. Peter and Paul Oratory**

- Fixed the pavilion roof after a tree branch damaged it this June.
- Removed several old trees to avoid future damage.
- Removed the broken cement water fountain from the courtyard.
- Repaired the rectory furnaces.
- Replated the tabernacle and processional crucifix.
- New hard bound missals and hymnals have begun to be used at the Oratory to replace the disposable missalettes and hymnals. Switching to permanent missals and hymnals will save thousands of dollars each year, prevent wasting paper, and will highlight the dignity of the Word of God.

#### **St. Benedict Church**

- A new missal stand was donated by a parishioner in honor of the Guardian Angels
- New heating and cooling units were installed in the St. Joseph Room, Marian Room, St. Francis Room, and basement storage room.
- The Choir Room is still in the process of being renovated.
- A new hand rail was installed along the stairs at the Gomber Ave. entrance.
- Repaired the sink hole in the Gomber Ave. parking lot.
- Removed trees in the Gomber Ave. parking lot.
- Work will begin on January 5th to replace the sidewalk in front of the parish office and the back patio of Fr. Borer's rectory. Do to improper sloping, these were causing water to seep into the basement of the office and rectory as well causing a slipping hazard.
- Bob Stoner retired in September after over 30 years of service.
- Gabriel dug up and repaired downspouts around the parish office.

#### **St. Benedict Social Hall Renovation**

- The parking lot on the south side of St. Benedict Church was dug up in order to repair a collapsed drainage pipe that was causing water damage in the social hall.
- The wood paneling in the social hall was removed due to water damage and replaced with dry wall.
- Interior drains and a sump pump were installed along the south side wall in order to prevent future water damage.
- New lights and drop ceiling have been installed in the social hall and conference room.
- New exterior doors were installed in the conference room and social hall.
- A new cement ramp was installed in the social hall on the Gomber side entrance.
- New tile flooring is currently being installed in the social hall and kitchen.
- The women's restroom is being completely overhauled and turned into a men's restroom.
- A new handicapped accessible women's restroom is being built next to the old one.
- New lights, drop ceiling, tile floor, and paint in the hallway by the restrooms.
- New tables and chairs.
- Canvas paintings of the Luminous Mysteries of the Rosary (aka "Mysteries of Light") will be hung up along the walls of the social hall.
  - As Christ Our Light Parish, these Mysteries of the Rosary remind us of key moments in the public life of Jesus:
    - The Baptism of Jesus, The Wedding Feast at Cana, The Proclamation of the Kingdom of God, The Transfiguration and The Last Supper
  - There will be two paintings of each of these mysteries in order to highlight different artists' perspectives.

### **Social Hall / Cafeteria Kitchen**

- The doorway and counter windows in the cafeteria kitchen were expanded to increase visibility and ease of access.
- New drop ceiling, lights, and tile floor have been installed in the kitchen.
- New countertops were installed in the cafeteria kitchen.
- The cabinets in the cafeteria kitchen have been painted.
- A new commercial dish washer will be installed in the cafeteria kitchen to be up to code.
- New commercial grade appliances will replace the old appliances in the kitchen.

### **Sacraments from January through December 2025**

- Baptisms: 22
- First Communions: 28
- Confirmations: 37
- Weddings: 4
- Funerals: 22
- There are 32 people in the OCIA process preparing to enter the Church this Easter.

### **Cemetery Committee**

- Seminarian Caleb Baker organized several work days at the parish cemeteries. They cleaned the head stones, trimmed shrubs, and replaced dirt around the bases of headstones to prevent freezing water from tipping them.
- Caleb worked with the Diocese of Steubenville to negotiate a contract with Plot Box, a cemetery company that provides digital maps and computer software.
- In November, Plot Box used drones to photograph the three cemeteries. We are now waiting for the digital maps to be processed so we can upload our records.

### **Knights of Columbus**

- The Knights of Columbus is a Catholic Men's Organization that focuses on charity, service, and fraternity.
- The Knights raised money for their charitable works through the Lent Fish Fries, raffle tickets, and Golf Scramble.
- The Knights donated \$7,500 to help fund the "Baby Box Project" at the Cambridge Fire Station. This initiative is founded to help save unwanted babies in our community.
- The Columbian Club branch of the Knights assisted nearly two dozen families affected by house fires this past year.
- Contact info: Grand Knight, Jeff Ricketts (740) 995-3717 or email [jeffricketts5@gmail.com](mailto:jeffricketts5@gmail.com).

### **Saint Vincent de Paul Society**

- The Saint Vincent de Paul Society is a charitable organization that helps those in need, especially by assisting with housing, rent, utility bills, and transportation. It also helps direct people to locate other available resources and sources of support in our community.
- The members of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society focus on growing in daily holiness and helping their fellow members and clients to do the same.
- Our SVDP is open in the parish office on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays.
- This year, the St. Vincent de Paul Society launched a new outreach ministry to residents at the Berwick Hotel by providing monthly talks on topics on the virtues and prayer.
- SVDP has also started an initiative called "Associate Membership" for those who are not able take part in the normal day-to-day activities of serving those in need but want to be connected to the group and support the mission of SVDP through prayer.
- The first quarterly meeting for the Associate Members will be January 11th at 2:00 pm in the Marian Room.
- Contact info: President Peggy Hayden at the Parish Office (740) 432-7609

### **Advocates for the Unborn and Guernsey County Right to Life (GCRL)**

- Advocates for the Unborn and Guernsey County Right to Life merged in November into one group that kept the GCRL name.
- The mission of GCRL is to defend life from conception to natural death.
- Meetings are the 1st Sunday of each month at 2:30 in the St. Benedict Marian Room. Teens are welcome to join meetings and activities.
- Most active members are from Christ Our Light Parish. With financial support, you will receive our newsletters to keep you up-to-date on current life issues. Financial support helps us purchase educational materials for events and out-reach.
- Please become a member of GCRL. Membership forms are on the “Respect Life” bulletin board in the St. Benedict vestibule.
- Contact info: Joyce Day 740-584-3780. Email: Uarespecialtoday@gmail.com.

### **Samaritan Center**

- The Samaritan Center is not specifically a program of Christ Our Light Parish; however, the parish has assisted with financial support and at one time over half the board members were from Christ Our Light Parish.
- The mission is to strive through faith-based and community cooperation to provide shelter for individuals and families in crisis, and to support them in their efforts to gain stability and permanent housing. The focus is on Transitional not emergency housing.
- Fund raisers for the Samaritan Center include Soup Luncheons at the Presbyterian Fellowship Hall and a “Night in a Box” in October each year. They have partnered with St. Vincent de Paul to help pay rent or utility bills to keep families housed.
- They are searching for new board members or involved people. Contact Stevie Fairchild 740-995-0605 or the Samaritan Center 740-435-0333.

### **St. Benedict Choir**

- The choir leads the congregation in singing and enhancing the beauty of the liturgy.
- They rehearse every Sunday at 9:00 am.
- They have grown both in numbers and in musical skills. Any adult or teen who loves to sing and is willing to commit to the time is welcome. It is not necessary to be able to read music, (although that is helpful).
- Mary Schlacks, the music director, will happily help anyone who would like to join but is intimidated by singing solo. Anyone can talk to her or any choir member at church or email her at wschlacks2@frontier.com

### **Altar Society**

- The Altar Society is a group of women and children who help take care of the church.
- They wash and iron the altar linens, water the flowers, decorate, clean, polish, and help make the church a beautiful place for Jesus to dwell in our midst.

### **Forged Men’s Group**

- A men’s group founded in November for men of the parish to gather for prayer, formation, and friendship.
- They meet on the first Wednesday of the month at 8:00 pm in the parish maintenance garage on 7th Street for prayer and a formation talk, followed by informal visiting and conversation.
- Contact Deacon Budd at rbudd@diosteub.org or Chris Sweeney at christopher\_sweeney\_02@yahoo.com



## St. Benedict School

- In August we hired a new school principal, Mrs. Tricia Luthman. She has been incredible! Here are some of the projects that she has accomplished in the past 4 months:
  - She joined the Chamber of Commerce as part of her efforts to promote the school.
  - Hired Mrs. Lindsey Hunter as the School Secretary and Auction Coordinator.
  - Hired Mr. Ty Sexton as the School Athletic Director.
  - Hired Ms. Heather Meyers as the new Cafeteria Assistant.
  - Working to bring in a janitorial company.
  - Worked with the health department and national lunch program ensure the students would have lunch while the cafeteria was closed due to water damage.
  - Installed a campus wide security camera system.
  - Replaced old broken plumbing in the girls and boys restrooms.
  - Repaired one of the boilers in the elementary school.
  - Purchased 20 new school desks and chairs.
  - Contracted with a company to provide clean rugs at all the entrances each week.
  - Painted the gym hallway.
  - Signed a contract to replace the broken block windows on the north side of the gym.
  - Signed a contract to abate all asbestos tiles in the elementary school this summer.
  - Arranged a Summer STEM Program from the National Inventors Hall of Fame to come to St. Benedict school this upcoming summer.
- The next Annual Auction is scheduled for Saturday, March 7<sup>th</sup> in the Gym.

## Gratitude

- As we reflect on this Jubilee Year, I want to offer my heartfelt thanks to each and every member of our parish. May the graces of this Jubilee continue to strengthen us as we move forward together in Christ's light.



## Holy Year 2025

Bishop Edward M. Lohse closed the Holy Year 2025 with the celebration of Mass at the Basilica of Saint Mary of the Assumption in Marietta, Ohio on the Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph on Sunday, December 28<sup>th</sup>.



## Jubilee Year 2025 in Review by Deacon Ryan Budd

Last Sunday, Deacon Budd and Mr. Caleb joined Mr. John Paul and the other seminarians for the Mass for the close of the Jubilee Year of Hope at the Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption in Marietta. So much has happened in this grace-filled year! We thought it was worth pondering the many things that have taken place.

- January: We had an awesome turnout to our Parish Feast Day celebration at the St. Benedict School gym, and Sts. Peter and Paul Social Hall, despite terrible weather. Also, Mr. John Paul debuted the new Parish Logo, and published a fantastic description of all its profound symbolism.
- February: Our parish had our nine-day Parish Mission. Eucharistic Adoration was available for 12 hours a day for nine days, with two conferences each day, one at noon and another at 6pm. Lots of people attended, and many people said they felt a new era at the parish had begun.
- March: Thanks to lots of hard work and volunteer hours, our School Auction broke records, raising around \$55,000.00 to support our school.
- April: Many parishioners made a pilgrimage to attend the Chrism Mass at the Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption in Marietta. Father Ginnetti hosted lunch with the winners of the Vocations Essay Contest. At the Easter Vigil, our parish also welcomed a dozen new Catholics into the Church, the largest class in decades.
- May: Pope Leo XIV was elected Sovereign Pontiff and began his ministry in Rome. Closer to home, Mr. John Paul professed candidacy, becoming an official, recognized candidate for Ordination in our diocese. Many parishioners made a pilgrimage to Steubenville to attend the Mass. Our parish also began our Hallow Parish Partnership.
- June: The Seminarian Jubilee Tour passed through our parish, with a holy hour, a talk by Mr. William Gugala, the Diocese's newest seminarian, and a highly-attended reception. A few days later, Deacon Budd was ordained in Steubenville, and many parishioners attended the Mass in Steubenville. Sts. Peter and Paul also celebrated their patronal feast day with a massive turnout. Our Parish was consecrated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary on her feast day.
- July: Mr. John Paul led a group of high-schoolers to the Steubenville Conference at Franciscan University. We also hired our new principal, Mrs. Tricia Luthman, who got right to work helping set our parish school on a sustainable path to keeping Catholic education strong here in Guernsey County. We also began renovations to install heating and air conditioning in the front part of St. Benedict Church, assisted by generous donors.
- August: Mr. John Paul took leave of us to return to seminary studies, and also debuted our new parish Web site, [colcatholic.org](http://colcatholic.org) where the Bulletins and monthly calendars can be viewed and forms can now be filled out online.
- September: We had our Hallow Parish Mission with Rob Montepare, including three talks and social receptions. We also celebrated the hugely successful School Annual Appeal with a reception where Appeal donors got to meet and speak with Mrs. Luthman.
- November: We had record turnout at the All Saints Day party, which featured a massive bonfire and two pinatas made by our parish high school youth group, "Friends of God."
- December: We spent the month preparing for Christmas and the light that Christ brings to us all.